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ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS THIRTY-FIFTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Hisham ELZIMAITY (Egypt)

PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997

Part one

1. The proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 was introduced by the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management and by the Controller at the 10th meeting of the Committee for Programme and Coordination on 23 May 1995.

2. The Committee was informed that the paramount consideration in formulating the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997 was to put forward a proposal that responded fully and in the most cost-effective manner to the mandates provided by Member States. The level of the resources proposed, in comparable terms, was lower than the revised appropriations for 1994-1995 and lower than the programme budget outline for the biennium 1996-1997. A determined effort had been made by programme managers to look for efficiency gains in the form of rationalization of work programmes, improvement in productivity and simplification of work procedures, and, as a result, there have been savings without affecting delivery of mandated activities. The Committee was informed that the Secretariat would continue to review overlapping and duplication of work.

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3. The Committee was also informed that the distribution of resources was guided by the priority areas as identified in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as revised, 1/ and also by those reflected in the budget outline, namely, political affairs, international and regional cooperation for development, human rights, humanitarian affairs and internal oversight.

4. It was pointed out to the Committee that the new format of the budget included a self-contained part one, which gave a comprehensive picture without requiring reference to individual budget sections. New features included summaries of each budget section, additional information on expenditures for the biennium 1992-1993 and information on extrabudgetary expenditures and projections by object of expenditure.

5. At its 10th to 13th meetings, on 23 and 24 May, the Committee considered part one of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

Discussion

6. Some delegations expressed concern for the reduction in the number of subprogrammes in the proposed programme budget and stressed the need for in-depth consideration of this issue during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

7. A number of delegations welcomed the significant reduction in resource levels in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, which is to be achieved through maximum efforts at efficiency. Several other delegations recognized the increased demands being placed upon the Organization and stressed that a reduction in the budget should not be perceived as meaning a reduced role for the Organization and that such a reduction must not affect the proper implementation of all mandated programmes and activities. Those delegations expressed concern for the possible negative impact that the reductions could have on the implementation of programmes, in particular those in the economic area. A number of delegations were of the view that it was the responsibility of Member States to ensure that there were no discrepancies between mandates and resources, and emphasized that once the budget was approved it was essential for Member States to meet their financial obligations by paying their assessments in full, on time and without conditions.

8. Several delegations stressed the importance of strictly adhering to the priorities as set in the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as revised, in particular with regard to African economic recovery and relevant programmes, mainly programme 45. Other delegations recalled that General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 required the Secretary-General, in preparing the biennial budgets, to indicate priorities, reflecting general trends of a broad sectoral nature, and were of the view that the priorities indicated in the proposed programme budget for biennium 1996-1997 were appropriate.

9. Some delegations questioned the appropriateness of including internal oversight among the priorities of a broad sectoral nature, emphasizing that it was not in itself a substantive activity of the Organization or a priority

agreed by the General Assembly, and stressed that they did not approve of the proposed increase in the budget for the Office of Internal Oversight Services at the expense of other mandated activities of the Organization. One delegation questioned the excessive and disproportionate increase in the budget for the Office, taking into account that this is not a priority decided on by the General Assembly. Many delegations regretted that the Secretariat did not take fully into consideration the views expressed by Member States when they considered the budget outline (A/49/310) during the forty-ninth session, and expressed their views that the Secretariat should strictly comply with decisions by Member States. Other delegations emphasized their support for the strengthening of the Office, which had an important role in all programmes and stressed the need for additional resources for that Office as proposed in the budget proposal.

10. Many delegations expressed concern at the proposed reduction in resources for development, despite this being a priority, and stressed the need to ensure adequate resources for development activities. Other delegations underlined in particular their support for the designation of human rights, humanitarian affairs, peace-making, preventive diplomacy and internal oversight as priorities. Some delegations felt that priorities like human rights and humanitarian affairs should be allotted more resources than proposed. Other delegations questioned proposals for the provision of additional resources for human rights and humanitarian affairs. Some delegations stressed that the programme of work for 1996-1997 should properly reflect all mandates of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, particularly the right to development. Some delegations also emphasized the need to ensure that the proposed budget for humanitarian affairs is in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991.

11. Some delegations regretted that the Secretary-General proposed the transfer of posts from the peace-keeping support account to the regular budget without any legislative mandate. Those delegations emphasized the importance of equal treatment regarding the transfer of resources to be given to all sections of the budget. Other delegations emphasized that the Secretary-General was mandated to carry out backstopping of peace-keeping operations and that the proposed transfer of posts concerned only the method of financing, and was therefore a legitimate part of the budget proposal for the Department of Peace-keeping Operations.

12. Some delegations stressed that the Secretary-General did not have the mandate to propose the establishment at Vienna of a unit for the support of reconstruction and development in Central and Eastern Europe. They questioned some of the activities proposed to be carried out by that unit. Other delegations, however, emphasized that the Secretary-General had a mandate for those activities and expressed support for the transfer of the unit as a means to implement mandated activities in a more cost-effective manner. Several delegations noted that the Secretary-General's proposal referred to the establishment of a new office, while the Committee was informed by the representative of the Secretary-General that the intention was to transfer the Unit now at Geneva to Vienna. Therefore it was also stressed that clearer information was required. Some delegations emphasized that the activities

related to the reconstruction and development of Central and Eastern Europe should continue to be undertaken by ECE.

13. With regard to the activities not carried over from the current biennium to 1996-1997, amounting to $92.8 million, many delegations noted that those resources were for activities related to the preparation and convening of the global conferences that were held during the biennium 1994-1995, the completion of special missions such as UNOMSA, completion of apartheid activities and the completion of major construction in ECA.

14. Many delegations stressed that the decrease in the level of resources should not affect priority areas, the economic development of developing countries and, in particular, African economic recovery. These delegations stressed the need to increase the level of both regular budget and extrabudgetary resources in section 7B, Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development, and emphasized the importance of fully supporting programmes relating to Africa.

15. Many delegations stressed the importance of follow-up activities to all major conferences and expressed the view that the Secretary-General should make every effort to provide adequate resources for the follow-up to those Conferences. They noted that adequate resources for follow-up activities to the World Summit for Social Development, the Ninth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and the Fourth World Conference on Women would be considered in the light of decisions by the General Assembly. Some delegations expressed concern that the absence of budgetary provision for these and other expected additional activities such as ad hoc missions, gave a misleading picture of the level of growth in the budget. Some delegations stressed the importance of improving coordination between the Department for Development Support and Management Services, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, and indicated that the division of their responsibilities should be in accordance with their respective mandates.

16. Many delegations expressed concern at the negative impact of the restructuring process on the implementation of some programmes. Those delegations also emphasized that in search of efficiency a distinction has to be made as to the nature of the different activities. Other delegations welcomed the fact that the efficiency savings were the result of rationalization of work programmes, improvement of productivity related to investment in technological improvements, simplification of work procedures and reductions in external printing, travel, consultants, supplies, equipment and general operating expenses, and therefore would not have a negative impact on mandated activities.

17. A number of delegations questioned the level of consultancy resources and the necessity for outside expertise. They expressed concern in respect of the heavy reliance on consultants instead of using the services of available staff and in-house expertise.

18. A number of delegations noted that as a result of recosting, Member States would be assessed a higher nominal amount than for the 1994-1995 biennium.

Other delegations stated that this situation was totally logical, taking into account the recosting methodology presently used. One delegation stated that this would be unacceptable and urged that significantly greater savings be achieved for 1996-1997. Several delegations expressed their concern over the effect of the future recosting and stated that every effort should continue to be made to achieve cost-effectiveness with relation to additional activities which might emerge towards the end of this year.

Conclusions and recommendations

19. The Committee expressed appreciation for the efforts made by the Secretary-General to present a programme budget on time and took note of the new features in the format of the budget.

20. The Committee noted that the total amount of resources requested by the Secretary-General was below the level determined in the programme budget outline for the biennium 1996-1997, and noted also the Secretary-General's assurances that such a reduction would in no way affect the implementation of all mandated programmes and activities.

21. The Committee recommended that proposals for provision of resources in the programme budget for 1996-1997 should be derived from the medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, as revised, and legislative mandates adopted subsequent to the adoption of the medium-term plan or its last revisions.

22. The Committee took note of the methodology used to prepare the proposed programme budget.

23. The Committee noted the refinements in the presentation of the budget and recognized that the new format included additional features, particularly the presentation of extrabudgetary resources and their linkage with the regular budget, as requested previously by the Committee.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 6 and corrigendum (A/47/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1), vols. I and II.